

11. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

“Even though you do not believe me, believe the works”

Jn 10:22-39

It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?” The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

What more could the Lord have done or said to convince the Jews that He was the Messiah they were waiting for? He had done the works that proved Him to be the One sent by the Father, He had spoken the Father's words and even entered into debates with them to convince them.

Again and again, Jesus returns to the crucial point: *‘you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.’*

There must be a condition on God's part that explains why some accept the message and others reject it or even become hostile towards it. In general, we men cannot know the reasons. What we do know is that there is no 'predestination' that determines why some are saved and others are not, as some Protestants claim with the doctrine of predestinationism. Such a doctrine is not compatible with the freedom and justice that God gives to each person.

However, it is not that we should feel that our hands are tied when we see a person who is inwardly closed, but that we are called to pray for him or her. God will be able to use this prayer in ways that only He knows how to transform a heart. Thus, by God's grace, even the stubborn can come to meet the One who is able to open their ears.

Jesus again points out to the Jews that His sheep follow Him and are safe in the hands of His Father, and that He and the Father are one. And, again, the hostile Jews try to stone Him. But the Lord confronts them and asks them specifically for which of His works they want to stone Him. They evade the question, because it was precisely these works that manifested the Lord's authority, while their reaction to them was the intention to kill Him. The Jews could not deny the works that Jesus had done. However, even here they try to cast suspicion, and thus increasingly obstruct the way. Evidently, the religious leaders also feared that the people would increasingly take Jesus' side and believe in Him.

Continuing the dispute, when the Jews pointed out that they wanted to kill Him because He made Himself equal to God, Jesus again made it clear: *"If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."*

There was no longer any possibility of evasion! This dispute could not be settled by diplomacy or human mediation. It was about the truth: was Jesus the Son of God? Would they believe in Him or not? It would soon become clear what decision those hostile Jews had made.